

"Single Married Divorced or Widowed," Part 4 - 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 – February 1st, 2015

- Today's teaching will be part four of a series I've titled, "Single Married Divorced or Widowed."
- Our text today doesn't require a warning as the previous ones did as here; Paul answers their questions concerning marriage and divorce.
- It's important to remember that from chapter seven on through the rest of the book, Paul is answering questions they sent him in a letter.

4. Should I get separated or divorced? (Verses 10-11)

10 To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. 11 But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

- v10 Paul makes it clear this command is from the Lord and not himself the first of which is that the wife is not to separate from her husband.
- v11 He says if she does, she's to remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband, and also that the husband must not divorce his wife.
- It seems the Corinthian Christians were of the belief that being single was more spiritual than being married, which is why they ask him this.

- Paul's answer is true to form such that he's very blunt when he says to the wife, absolutely not, you must not separate from your husband.
- And, for the husband that is thinking he should divorce his wife, Paul then goes on to say; "absolutely not, you must not divorce your wife."
- This begs the question of why he says if the wife does separate from her husband, she must either stay unmarried, or be reconciled to him.

- In order to answer this question, we must also answer the question of what are the Biblical reasons for Christian couples to get a divorce?
- At the risk of offering an oversimplification there are two specific reasons, the first of which is if the husband or wife has committed adultery.

Matthew 19:3–8 (NIV) — 3 Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" 4 "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." 7 "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" 8 Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.

- The second Biblical reason for a divorce is if a non-Christian husband or wife abandons the Christian, which we'll see in 1 Corinthians 7:15.

1 Corinthians 7:15 (NIV) — 15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.

- This brings up another question of what if a Christian couple gets a divorce for reasons other than the two aforementioned Biblical reasons.

Matthew 19:9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

- Now, this presents us with yet another question, which is this; what if we divorced for unbiblical reasons and are married to someone else?
- The short answer is, do not divorce them and reconcile with your ex. Simply put, you're remarried now, and Biblically you should remain so.
- You guessed it, there's even another question that comes up, and it's this; if I stay married, am I still saved, but if so, am I now disqualified?

- Again, you'll forgive the oversimplification, but the simple answer is no, divorce is not the unforgivable sin, and you're not even disqualified.
- More specifically the Pastoral Epistles Timothy and Titus as they're called say men are to be the husband of one wife, (a one woman man).
- Sadly, many in the church today have placed the scarlet letter of divorce on the divorced under the banner of their legalistic condemnation.

- Here's the bottom line, absent the two Biblical grounds for divorce, divorce should never be an option for the Christian husband and wife.
- The late Ruth Bell Graham, when asked if she ever considered divorcing Billy Graham answered by saying, "Divorce No! Murder Yes!"

Reminds me of a story a Calvary Chapel pastor told about a wife who on Valentines Day says to her husband after 30-years of marriage, "you know, if I would have shot you when I wanted to, I'd be getting out of prison right about now."

Here's another, "A woman's husband had been slipping in and out of a coma for several months, yet she had stayed by his bedside every single day. One day, when he came to, he motioned for her to come nearer. As she sat by him, he whispered, eyes full of tears, "You know what? You have been with me through all the bad times. When I got fired, you were there to support me. When my business failed, you were there. When I got shot, you were by my side. When we lost the house, you stayed right here. When my health started failing, you were still by my side. You know what?" "What dear?" she asked gently, smiling as her heart began to fill with warmth. "I think you're bad luck."

Last week my wife and I were asked by someone about to celebrate a 10th wedding anniversary, what the secret to our 26 years of marriage was. I instantly turned to my wife and said, "I'll let you answer that question darling," to which he responded, "so that's your secret." I then said to him, that I wear the pants in my family; it's just that my wife tells me which pair to wear.

The late US President, Lyndon B. Johnson was quoted as saying, "I have learned that only two things are necessary to keep one's wife happy. First, let her think she's having her own way. And second, let her have it.

- Actually there is some truth to this in the sense that a wife who is loved as Christ loved the church will never be a wife who seeks a divorce.
- I'll take it a step further and suggest that when a husband loves his wife this way she in turn will respect him and also never seek a divorce.
- Here's a most interesting Swedish proverb that I think is apropos, "Love me when I least deserve it because that is when I really need it."

Ephesians 5:25–33 (NIV) — 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.